[Vol. 1.] THE [No. 49.]

WEEKLY VISITANT.

"OURS ARE THE PLANS OF FAIR DELIGHTFUL PEACE,
"UNWARP'D BY PARTY RAGE, TO LIVE LIKE BROTHERS."

SALEM—SATURDAY EVENING DECEMBER 6, 1806.

MISCELLANY.

FOR THE WEEKLY VISITANT.

AN ODD ONE.

Jack Comet is as eccentric in all his movements as unaccountable in his nature; and as great a wonder in the system of society as are his namesake orbs in the well regulated association of suns and worlds. He is bound by no rules, and is an object at once incalculable and unintelligible. If a friend wishes to find him, he must stand still and wait with patience till he chance to dart into the visible horizon, for he bloweth where he listeth, and no one can tell whence he cometh or whither he goeth.

He dresses in boots and a treble caped great coat in summer—he exposeth his form, scarcely clad, to the inclemencies of the season, and the fury of its storms. Independant of the controul of custom, he literally turns night into day and day into night—sings psalms every day in the week except Sunday, and then disturbs his neighbor's devotion by roaring a catch or whistling a country dance.—Fashion cannot number him among her subjects, for the outer construction of his mottled cloaths betrays the singularity of his mind, and the originality of his ideas. Confer a favor on him, and he will become your most implacable enemy—treat him with indifference and contempt, and he will give you all his esteem, and all his affection. To the indigent pilgrim unasked he bountifully bestows, but deaf to the petitions of the beggar, his hand holds his cash with a convulsive grasp. When you request a serious answer to the most imporaant question, he will disappoint you with a mere "gilliand story, and as Tom Wilton says, blow down the fabric of anticipation with a puff of ill-timed jocularity." He is endowed by nature with mental powers as extraordinary as his character is uncommon:—The best education our country could afford, has stored his mind with abundance of ancient and modern learning. He speaks and thinks concerning the important sciences with levity; but argues and reasons most philosophically upon the nature of a pismire's understanding, or the wing of a butterfly. He talks Latin to the Ladies—writes love-letters to grand-mothers—and repeats sonnets and epigrams to clergymen and scholars.

These biographical sketches are penned by one who has long

known Jack Comet, loved him for his many good qualities, and respected him for his various literary and scientific attainments. I know not whether the drollness of his character may be attributed to his natural intellectual faculties, to a mistaken estimate of men and manners, or mere whim and affectation. Certain I am, that if he should be convinced of his errors and induced to reform, he would be an invaluable blessing to his friends and an ornament to society. At present, possessing all the requisites to establish a reputation for virtue and learning, to insure the love and respect of all his fellow citizens, he is viewed with pity by those who can distinguish his great and good qualities among all the rubbish of his inconsistencies and improprieties, and is contemned by the ignorant and unthinking. Deprived of the mild consolations of friendship—the best joys of society—his existence is as irksome and tedious to himself, as it is useless to all around him.

"Who would not laugh if such a man there be?
Who would not weep if Atticus were he?"

HOTSPUR.

The following observations, though written in England, will pretty nearly apply to the newspapers of this country; and as the interest of the VISITANT will soon be transferred to a weekly newspaper, under the title of "THE FRIEND," we wish to engage the attention of the public to the reflections of Dr. Mavor on this subject. Of the volume from which these remarks are selected, the Editor of the Flowers of Literature observes, "This is indeed a father's gift, and worthy of being presented by every father to his progeny."

IMPORTANCE OF NEWSPAPERS.

From Mavor's Father's Gift.

Would parents and tutors be careful to put a well conducted and chaste newspaper in the way of ingenious youth, they would find it lead to great and rapid improvements in the science of life and manners, with the least possible trouble to themselves. Novelty has sufficient attractions for the young; and such a literary dessert might give a higher relish to its enjoyment.

The subsequent essay is intended to encourage this mode of promoting juvenile proficiency; and to stimulate the managers of such publications to render them meet for the eyes of unsuspecting innocence.

Among the various causes that have contributed to the general diffusion of knowledge in the present age, nothing seems to have been of more importance than the circulation of so many different newspapers. A superficial observer will, perhaps, smile at this opinion: when he considers what slender abilities are generally employed in the compilation of some, what prejudice is displayed in the conduct of others, and what factious principles are disseminated through this medium; he will, probably, be surprised that a newspaper, however well it may be conducted, should come in for such distinguished applause.

But where is the good that may not be perverted to evil? the blessing that may not be abused? Excess of liberty degenerates into licentiousness; and too great indulgence in the pleasures of the table may prove as fatal as the most deleterious poisons.

It is well known that, within these few years, diurnal publications have been multiplied to an amazing degree; and their characters, for taste in arrangemeut, and elegance of composition, in some measure, keep pace with their numbers. Competition begets exertion; and those who hope that tneir writings shall be read, and their lobours patronized, study to adorn them with all the charms of polished diction and the attractive grace of novelty.

The information that newspapers formerly conveyed was trivial; and the circulation was proportionally confined.

The learned, the rich, and the idle, alone thought of encouraging them, about half a century ago; now all ranks and descriptions of men, read, study, and endeavor to comprehend the intelligence they convey, and too often adopt the principles they recommend, without examination; and act on them, as if they were sanctioned by irrefragable authority. This, no doubt, is an unfortunate circumstance; but it is in some measure remedied by the contrary opinions of contending journalits; and *truth and justice may generally be found, by comparing different statements, and keeping a middle course between both extremes.*

It is dangerous for those only, who read but one paper, and that paper is made the vehicle of false principles and delusive reasoning; or, where original prejudice gives a wrong bias to the mind; and thus converts even salutary caution to criminal intemperance.

On the other hand, a paper conducted on proper religions and political principles, is calculated to do infinite service among those, more especially, who are incapable of thinking for themselves, and who, by habits, acquire the sentiments that perpetually meet their eyes, and amuse their vacant hours. And, in the country particularly, how many thousands receive what they read in a periodical publication as oracular decisions; and, to whom a knowledge of social or moral duty could not otherwise be communicated, as they too often neglect the established means of instruction, or despise its assistance. Hence the importance of journals that preserves these grand objects in view—to illuminate, and to reform. And from the same consideration, may be seen the infamy and guilt of those who poison the public mind, weaken the faith of revelation, unhinge the ties of moral order, and disseminate opinions subversive of the well being of civilized society. Could the authors of such publications, whether issuing regularly or occasionally from the press, sit down and consider, with calm attention, what possible ill effects may result from their want of integrity or duty as men and citizens, they would shudder at the reflection.

The solitary views of men may affect a few; but who can estimate the mischief of public ill example, or atone for the wide-spread effects of pernicious principles.

But, on the tendency of newspapers, perhaps, enough has been said. Their general direction, it is to be hoped, is good; and that much more service is done by the aggregate mass, than evil is occasioned by particular parts.

All, even the worst, in other points of view, tend to convey instruction, and to generalize knowledge. By giving intelligence

from every quarter of the globe, they excite inquiries; by displaying the good and bad qualities of other nations, they remove ill-founded prejudices, or confirm deserved aversion. They communicate beneficial discoveries, which would otherwise be lost; they record transactions which engage admiration, or rivet disgust; they warn by example, and instruct by censure. They diffuse taste; they correct prevailing absurdities. They awe the proudest into the conviction of keeping some terms with public opinion.

They deter the flagitious from crimes, lest they should be held up to the public detestation: and, in fine, they watch over individual and public liberty, which can never be violated with impunity, while the press remains pure and free.

Thus, to the philosophic eye, the diurnal labours of characters, undignified by literature, appear capable of producing more extensively beneficial consequences than the abilities of a Plato, a Socrates, or a Johnson.

May such feel the value of the rank they hold; and never more disgrace it, by propagating vice or willful error, by lending their sanction to the worthless, or by weakening the bands that preserve mankind in harmony and happiness.

THE LAY PREACHER.

"Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart."

And where is the sullen mortal, who would refuse to obey so pleasant an injunction as this, coming too on the authority of Solomon?

However, as this doctrine at first view, seems to flatter the indulgence of the passions, and therefore to proceed with an ill grace from a moral teacher, let us look narrowly into Solomon's system, and endeavor that wisdom may be justified of her children.

In one of the most interesting and amusing Journals that we find in the Bible, Solomon has narrated to us the hopes and fears, which agitated his busy life. Born a monarch he could exercise supreme power, and a courtier of the muses he acquired the highest wisdom. His city was magnificent, his subjects loyal, commerce wafted him all that was rare from Sidon, and the decks of Tarshish ships glittered with the pageantry of its peacocks. In a situation so favorable to enjoyment, it was natural that he should hold his heart from no joy, and that the luxury of the East should excite him to refine on pleasure. From his love of letters his indulgencies were of course *mental*. He conned the pithy sayings of Orientals, and fatigued his faculties with the scholastic jargon of many a Rabbi.—But soon discovering that he was directing his thoughts through a trackless maze, that if such abstruse disquisitions were too eagerly pursued, wisdom would turn into folly and too much learning make him mad, he resolved to descend from the pinnacle of speculation, and mix with men in the highway of life. We then hear of his agricultural experiments, the cares of a numerous household, and his *publick* works. Through the dusty desart of Palestine, he probably

conveyed distant water to thirsty subjects, and overarched the brook Cedron with numerous bridges. But the restless Prince, when the labours of the day were past, and he communed with his own heart in the *inner* chamber of the palace found, in reflection's sober hour, that this was a sore travail and vexation of spirit. At length, after numerous experiments on happiness, he drew a formal comparison between the various situations in life. After stating the accompt of human hope and disappointment, with *clerical* accuracy, that Folly has a funeral splendid as that of the wise, that the goods of fortune are perishable, and though attained by industry, may probably descend to an Idler, that the reign of novelty was past, and every object wore the uniform of sameness, he concludes, I think philosophically, by arguing against anxiety and enjoining a moderate participation of festal joys.

From various passages, interspersed throughout the *volume of our belief*, I am persuaded that christianity was designed to be a *cheerful* system. Miserable was the perversion of its precepts by those in early time, who believed that none could prove sincere votaries, but the moping and the austere. It is wonderful that primitive Piety, who must be supposed to hold the Bible constantly in her hand, should not discern the numerous texts enjoined to sanctify the moderate use of the good things of this world. Not to be too anxious, and to rejoice ever more are particular precepts of the New Testament. I hope I shall not be accused of thinking like certain philosophers of the sect of the Epicureans, when I frankly ackowledge that I can see no reason to forbid the straitest of our religion, eating a dinner with *sweet* herbs instead of the *bitter* ones of the passover. Should such a feast of joy provoke thirst, I shall not deem it an infraction of gospel rules, to indulge him with a *little wine*. The vineyards of *Engedi* are no more, but those of France remain, and if a Jewish law-giver could "tie his colt to the vine, and dip his mantle in the *blood* of the garpe," why may not the sober glass be tinged, and why were grapes given us, unless to be crushed?

INSTANCES OF EARLY PROFICIENCY.

Avicenna born at Borhara, at ten years understood human sciences and the Alkoran, and went through all the Encyclopædia before eighteen, in which time he slept no whole night, and minded nothing but reading.—Hottingar.

Torquoto Tasso, spoke plain at six months old; at three years went to school; at seven he understood Latin and Greek, and made verses; before twelve he finished his course of rhetoric, poetry, logic, and ethics; at seventeen received his degree in philosophy, laws, and divinity, and printed his *Rinaldo*.

Grotius, at eight years old, made verses, and performed his public exercises in philosophy; before fifteen he put forth his commentary upon Artus.

Calvin printed his Institutions before he was twenty five.

Toslatus learned all the liberal sciences without being taught, and writ, in the forty years he lived, as much as most in that time can read; and yet, at the same time, he was counsellor to the king, reserendary major of Spain, and professor of philosophy, divinity, and law, in Salamanca.

Monsieur *Pascal*, observing the sound of an earthern dish at table, inquired the reason, and presentiy after wrote a Treatise concerning Sounds; at about eleven years of age; at twelve he read and comprehended Euclid's Elements with great facility, without any master; at sixteen he composed a Treatise on Conics; at nineteen, he invented that instrument in arithmetic, now in print.

MAGNANIMITY.

The following verses (by SELLECK OSBORN) are founded on the story of an English gentleman and lady, who were on their passage to the East Indies, in one of the vessels of an English fleet. For some particular reason, they left their vessel, and went on board the Admiral's ship, leaving two young children in the care of a negro servant who was about eighteen years of age.—In a violent storm the ship was fast sinking, when a boat arrived from the Admirals ship for their relief.—The crew crouded to the boat—but the negro lad, finding there was only room for himself alone, or the two children, gererously put them on board, and remained himself on the wreck, which, with the generous boy was immediately engulphed in the ocean.

TREMENDOUS howls the angry blast!
The boldest hearts with terror quake!
High o'er the vessel's tottering mast,
The liquid mountains fiercely break!
Each eye is fix'd in wild despair,
And death diplays his terrors there.

Now plunging in the dread abyss,
They pierce the bosom of the deep—
Now rise where vivid lightnings hiss,
And seem the murky clouds to sweep—
Through the dark waste the thunders roll,
And horrors chill the frighted soul!

The storm abates—but shatter'd sore,
The leaky vessel drinks the brine;
They seek in vain some friendly shore,
Their spirits sink—their hopes decline!
But lo! what joy succeeds their grief,
Kind Heaven grants the wish'd relief.

See, on the deck young MARCO stands,
Two blooming cherubs by his side;
Entrusted to his faithful hands;
"A mother's joy, a father's pride—"
Though black his SKIN, as shades of night,
His HEART is fair, his SOUL is white.

Each to the yawl with rapture flies,
Except the noble, generous boy,
"Go, lovely infants—go" he cries,
"And give your anxious parents joy.
No mother will for MARCO weep,
When fate entombs him in the deep.

Long have MY kindred ceased to grieve,
No sister kind MY fate shall mourn—
No breast for ME a sigh will heave,
No bosom friend wait MY return!"
He said—and sinking, sought the happy shore,
Where toil and slavery vex his soul no more.

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EPIGRAM.

"My head, Tom,'s confused with your nonsense and bother;
It goes in at one ear and out at the other."
"Of that, my friend Dick, I was ever aware,
For nonsense, your head is a pure *thoroughfare*."

SONG—TO THE DAYS OF MY YOUTH.

BY MISS TEMPLE.

Days of my youth, ye are gliding away !
Days of my youth, ye will shortly be vanish'd ;
Soon will the warm tints of Fancy decay,
Soon from my cheek will the roses be banish'd.

Brief as the wild flower that lives on the spray,
Brief as the bright dew that hangs on the morning ;
Youth gives its blossoms to life's barren way,
All the drear waste for an instant adorning.

Soon will the hopes of my bosom be hush'd,
Soon will the hours of my day-dreams be number'd,
Quickly the shoots of romance will be crush'd,
All will be fled that I've wish'd, or I've slumber'd.

Go, then, ye warm-beaming joys of a day,
Go, then, ye moments of bliss and of sorrow ;
Calm will I bend me to Time's pale decay,
And from Contentment new roses will borrow.

SONG——THE WEDDING DAY.

What virgin or shepherd, in valley or grove,
Will envy my innocent lays,
The song of the heart, and the offspring of love,
When sung in my Corydon's praise.
O'er brook and o'er break as he hies to the bow'r,
How lightsome my shepherd can trip ;
And sure when of love he describes the soft pow'r,
The honey-dew drops from his lip.

How sweet the primrose, the violet how sweet,
And sweet is the eglantine breeze,
But Corydon's kiss when by moonlight we meet,
To me is far sweeter than these.
I blush at his raptures, I hear all his vows,
I sigh when I offer to speak ;
And oh what delight my fond bosom o'erflows
When I feel the soft touch of his cheek.

Responsive and shrill be the notes from the spray,
Let the pipe through the village resound ;
Be smiles in each face O ye shepherds to day,
And ring the bells merrily round,
Your favours prepare my companions with speed,
Assist me my blushes to hide,
A twelvemonth ago on this day I agreed
To be my lov'd Corydon's bride.

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LIFE.

Life is very various, and if one livelihood fails, another may succeed : If one rank of life cannot be supported, we may flourish very well in another. 'Tis but descending a step lower, and the event would abundantly atone for the condescention. But this our pride will not suffer us to do, and we rather chuse to have that very pride wounded every day of our lives, than chrush it ourselves once for all.

Nothing can be so absurd as this behaviour, and yet nothing is more universal. We mistake even our own passions, and take even wrong ways to

indulge them. In my opinion a man might be as proud of leaving off his sword, and going to the plough, or wearning a livery, as wearing it still in want, and wretchedness, by laying himself open to insults, in intreatiug obligations.

Neither, indeed, can a man be said to be poor who possesses as much as he wants, and the nearer we come down to the vulgar, the fewer our demands, and the easier satisfied of course. To this may be added, that to be indepeudent is to be rich, and to despise misfortunes is the nearest way to be happy. But men have not courage enough to undertake such desperate cures on themselves: and they had rather die of the mortification, than cut off the limb.

I remember a little story of a gentleman of Gascoigne, who inherited 2000 crowns a year from his father, commenced Marquis at Paris, and being a gay, volatile genius, soon got the better of his fortune, and was reduced to the lowest ebb of wretchedness. Yet, in the midst of it, never lost his spirit and courage, or impotently repined at what was not to be remedied: But with the small pittance he had left, purchased a mule, and turned Water-Carrier. Sometime after which, as he was traffickihg his merchandize up and down the streets, he happened to meet two of his old companions, who would have avoided him for fear of giving him pain, at being caught in such an equipage. But he prevented them, sprung forward to salute them with his usual freedom, and, when they seemed to pity his ill fortune, briskly interrupted them by saying: "That he had 40,000 crowns worth of water in the Seyne, out for want of servants, he was obliged to sell it himself.

MRS. HAMILTON'S READINGS AND RECITATIONS,

On Thursday evening, were attended by a respectable auditory, who were considerably gratified, though she did not fully answer their expectations.

MARRIAGES.

In this town, Mr. William Tufts, to Miss Sally Burden. Mr. John Russell, to Miss Eunice Hunt. Capt. George Peirce, to Miss Elizabeth Webb.

DEATHS.

In Boston, on Thursday last, William Bant Sullivan, esq. aged 25.

At Beverly, Mrs. Elizabeth Chipman, aged 39, wife of Mr. Jos. Chipman.

In this town, Mr. Seth Brooks. Mrs. Mary Prince, aged 52, wife of Rev. Dr. Prince.

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SALEM, (Mass.)

PUBLISHED BY HAVEN POOL.

Directly west of the Tower of Dr. Prince's Meeting-House.

(Price $2 per annum—to be paid half yearly, in advance.)